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General Assembly
Sixty-fifth session

Official Records

103rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 22 June 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite members to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session should be elected from among the Group of Asian States.

In that connection, I have been informed by the Chairman of the Group of Asian States for the month of February 2011 that the Group has endorsed His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar for the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, I therefore declare Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session. Mr. Al-Nasser is well known in the byways of New York, where over the 12 years since his appointment as Permanent Representative of Qatar he has earned the respect and esteem of his colleagues. His history here has been marked by a long tradition of multilateral diplomacy.

This is not his first election to a leadership position at the United Nations. He has won distinction as the Chair of the Fourth Committee, the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China and the President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. His commitment to the values and ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is evident. Yesterday here in this Hall we engaged in another significant election, namely, the renewal of the mandate of the Secretary-General. I see that as a symbol of close cooperation between the Secretariat and Member States for a United Nations that is strong and credible on the international stage.

A number of important reforms are under way to strengthen the Organization, and it will be the President-elect's responsibility to continue that work. He can count on me and the members of my Office to ensure an efficient transition.

One essential element will be the revitalization of the Assembly and its presidency. I am very pleased to be able to offer the President-elect a copy of the manual that I hope will facilitate the work of his team and that of all Member State delegations. This manual, which we have prepared with the support of the Swiss Mission to the United Nations over the course of this

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year, is a further contribution to institutional memory. Presidents are elected annually, and it is important that the individual knowledge that is acquired can be conveyed. For anyone interested in the General Assembly, this guide seeks to answer all questions concerning the day-to-day procedures and functions of the General Assembly.

In today's world, the United Nations and the General Assembly are more necessary than ever. The values of the Charter are eternal and must continue to guide our actions in promoting peace, security and prosperity on the planet. The challenges to overcome are great but, by joining forces and seeing beyond purely national interests, we can succeed.

On behalf of the entire Assembly, I congratulate the President-elect and wish him every success in the exhilarating job of the presidency of the General Assembly, in the service of the Member States.

I now invite Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session, to take the floor.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar): It is with great honour that I thank my dear colleagues and friends for electing me by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss as President of the General Assembly at its present session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his presence here today, as well as to congratulate him on his reappointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Mr. Ban's reappointment is an indication of the credibility he enjoys. The success of the Organization over the past five years, which has seen the strengthening of the prominent place of the United Nations on the world stage, will no doubt be counted among his many achievements. I am glad that I will work with him during my presidency of the General Assembly.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

My election to this high position would not have been possible without the trust of the Asian Group, of which I am deeply proud and to which I am very grateful.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the unlimited support of my own Government under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, heir apparent. I am also grateful for the support of His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. I should also like to welcome the presence at this meeting of His Excellency Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and member of the Council of Ministers of the State of Qatar.

I would like to focus briefly on the particular importance of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, during which the world will experience important changes and face enormous political, social, economic and environmental challenges. Not a month goes by that we do not hear about a natural or a man-made disaster and the subsequent food, security, health and education crises that inevitably follow. At the same time, there are still people who are living under occupation, injustice and oppression who yearn for freedom, dignity and justice. Add to that human rights and peacekeeping operations, sustainable development, the concerns of least developed countries and small island States, the eradication of poverty, South-South cooperation, financing for development, dialogue among civilizations, the culture of peace, mediation, disarmament, combating international terrorism, system-wide coherence, the scale of assessments for apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations and numerous organizational and administrative matters, as well as many other sensitive issues.

In addition to those crucial questions, I would be glad to receive the Assembly's endorsement for the theme that I am proposing for the high-level debate at the opening of the sixty-sixth session, namely, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". I believe that the selection of this theme will enhance debate and deepen cooperation on this important issue that lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations.

I am speaking openly only because I realize that all of these challenges and issues affect the pivotal role of the Organization, its credibility and its very existence. The integrity, legitimacy, survival and effectiveness of the United Nations therefore depends on the Assembly as a whole.

Respect for diversity and pluralism regardless of religion, race or ethnicity is a principle upon which the United Nations was founded. I am therefore deeply honoured to have been chosen by my dear friends from different religions, races and ethnicities to serve as President of the Assembly. I pledge to everyone in the Hall today that I will undertake this important role in a spirit of constructive cooperation and mutual respect. I will assume the presidency with determination and persistence, backed by two decades of experience in the diplomatic corps at the United Nations. My efforts will be supported by a competent team that I have selected with care and attention and which reflects the same diversity I see here in the Hall.

Throughout my presidency, I will work in close cooperation and full coordination with all Member States and regional groups. It is only through our joint efforts that we can promote the lofty goals of the Organization, maintain international peace and security and strengthen friendship and good-neighbourly relations between nations and peoples.

The road to success must be built on the principle of partnership and on a deep sense of justice and responsibility. I will not limit my presidency to presiding over meetings or reading statements. Instead, I will focus as well on strengthening the role of the General Assembly and improving constructive cooperation between the Assembly and the various United Nations organs and specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations. I also aspire to act as a bridge between developed, developing and least developed countries in order to serve the interests of all Member States and the United Nations system as a whole.

The focus of my efforts will be on building consensus on major global challenges facing the world today, including armed conflict, the rights of peoples to self-determination, hunger, poverty, terrorism, climate change, the global economic and financial crisis and humanitarian response to natural disasters.

(*spoke in English*)

I will not hesitate to help members to overcome their differences over the issues to which I have referred. I will also expect them to shoulder their responsibilities as Member States to address those challenges with responsibility. In that regard, I would like to quote Margaret Thatcher:

> "I do not know anyone who has got to the top without hard work. That is the recipe. It will not always get you to the top, but should get you pretty near".

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Allow me to express my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your important contributions over the past year. I especially welcome your initiatives on the responsibility to protect, human security, the green economy and other pressing global challenges. You have been a wonderful partner. I look forward to continuing our work in the months ahead.

I also look forward to working with the President's successor. I warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdelaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Ambassador Al-Nasser has already served ably as President of the Security Council, Chairman of the Fourth Committee and Chairman of the Group of 77 and China. He has dealt with critical challenges ranging from war and instability to sustainable development and South-South cooperation. He has personally led the way on an issue of great concern to me and to my wife, that is, the world's response to autism.

Qatar itself is an increasingly important actor in the international arena. I have been to Doha many times for major international talks — on Libya, peace in the Middle East, the financial crisis, democracy, development and trade. Qatar also continues to play a role in facilitating the Darfur peace talks. I am grateful for its wide-ranging support for the work of the United Nations.

In more than 12 years at the United Nations, President-elect Al-Nasser has always appreciated the special role of the General Assembly. As he once said,

> "an enduring characteristic of this Organization is that, irrespective of the political and practical changes, the General Assembly remains its most inclusive body".

I completely agree. Long before I became Secretary-General, I had close contacts with the General Assembly, especially as Chef de Cabinet when the Republic of Korea held the presidency a decade ago.

I know from personal experience what the General Assembly can accomplish. I understand that the President-elect's office needs support to get the job done. I will always work to keep our partnership strong.

The President-elect has already made a significant contribution. I am sure that he will do even more as the leader of this most universal United Nations body. There is a great deal of work ahead. Millions of people around the world are looking to the United Nations with hope. We must answer their hopes with action. I ask the President-elect to please accept my heartfelt congratulations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I have the great honour, on behalf of the African States, to convey my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

The Assembly's choice of Mr. Al-Nasser was a particularly judicious one, as he is an experienced diplomat with broad experience at the United Nations whose courteous and patient nature predisposes him to being successful in his task.

In speaking of Ambassador Al-Nasser, I cannot fail to pay tribute to his country. The resolve and inspiration of its leaders has made Qatar a leading country in terms of finding solutions to the problems we face. We as Africans are particularly grateful to Qatar for the role that it is playing in settling the Darfur crisis in the Sudan. The world is also grateful to this country for its commitment to regulating international trade, as well as in particular for the emergence of an alliance of civilizations.

The President-elect therefore has the legitimacy and moral ability to successfully carry out his duties. I would therefore like to assure him that the African Group is fully prepared to extend its unwavering support as he tackles the numerous challenges associated with his post.

As we begin the transition towards the sixty-sixth session, the Organization must pave the way to finding effective responses to the many challenges facing it. In that regard, like all the other regions of the world, Africa is aware that such responses can only be the result of all pulling together to shoulder our shared responsibilities. We therefore reaffirm our commitment here to finding lasting solutions to armed conflicts, environmental degradation, the spread of diseases and social ills. The African Group will also support the President-elect's efforts towards better economic and political governance, which should involve a fair and comprehensive reform of the United Nations and the main international financial institutions.

We firmly believe that the leadership of the President-elect's country will be a source of inspiration and motivation that will guide him throughout his term of office and will enable him to consolidate the significant achievements of esteemed predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to speak before the General Assembly on two successive days on behalf of the Asian Group of States to convey our congratulations on the election of an Asian candidate to a prominent post.

Today, I would like warmly and sincerely to congratulate our colleague Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. This reconfirms our great trust in his ability and wisdom to lead the General Assembly. He has a spirit of determination, hope and optimism towards the achievement of the common objectives and noble purposes to which we aspire.

Most of us have come to know Ambassador Al-Nasser through his work as the Permanent Representative of the sisterly State of Qatar for over a decade. In that time, he has held a number of important posts, such as the chairmanship of the Fourth Committee and the Group of 77 and China, in addition to representing his country during its membership in the Security Council. In his time here, he has set an example to be emulated when it comes to courtesy, enthusiasm and dedication. We are confident that his vast experience, creativity and vision for renewal will have a great effect on his leadership of the work of the General Assembly. We count on this experience and vision to enrich our discussions, shed light on major

global challenges and help coordinate efforts to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter.

The agenda of the General Assembly at the next session constitutes a call to action vis-à-vis the issues, global challenges and risks faced by the international community. Climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, human rights, the elimination of poverty, disarmament, the reform of the United Nations and other questions require that we all continue and redouble our efforts to reach innovative solutions and achieve more progress.

I would like to reassure the President-elect that we are very pleased by his election and happy for sisterly Qatar, which is represented here today by its Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud. We would like to reassure him of the full support and cooperation of the Asian Group in achieving a successful outcome to the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We will be sincere partners in efforts to overcome the difficulties and challenges facing the world. We wish him every success during his term of office.

I would also like to express the deep gratitude of the Asian Group to you, Mr. Deiss, for your persistent efforts and tireless work during your presidency of the Assembly at the current session. Your distinguished leadership and wisdom have made a great impact on the success of this session. We look forward to continuing to work with you during the remaining months of your term. We also wish you good health, happiness and success in your future endeavours.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

Ambassador Al-Nasser is a well-known person at the United Nations. His remarkable diplomatic career and extensive experience in international affairs will be a significant advantage in his position, which includes a mandate to handle the complex and often challenging activities of the Assembly. His connection to the United Nations goes back to 1986, when he was first posted to the Permanent Mission of Qatar here in New York. That bond to multilateral diplomacy has been continually strengthened since then.

In addition to leading his country's delegation at the United Nations, Ambassador Al-Nasser has been effective in taking on various responsibilities, among them ably chairing the Assembly's Fourth Committee during the sixty-fourth session and presiding successfully over the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation; chairing the Group of 77 in 2004; and participating as a non-permanent member in the Security Council. He is thus well acquainted with the General Assembly's methods of work and the subtleties of United Nations negotiations, as well as with the value of reaching consensus on many major issues and ways to do that.

We have set some high priorities to address at the sixty-sixth session. These include making progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and dealing with a very tight agenda on sustainable development, while the issue of the revitalization of the Assembly is more pressing than ever, as are human rights issues and security challenges around the world. We hope that under Mr. Al-Nasser's able presidency, the Assembly will take important decisions on the current and emerging issues facing the international community.

Let me also express our special gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly during the current session, for his strong leadership and prominent voice in the Assembly. This session has been very demanding, with many high-level events and important declarations and decisions designed to shape and guide world policies for years to come. We should also mention Mr. Deiss's numerous efforts throughout the session to bring to Member States' attention proactive approaches to discussing global issues and adding a critical voice on global governance and the centrality of the United Nations.

Finally, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, we wish Mr. Deiss continuing fruitful activity in his outstanding diplomatic career. We also welcome and assure President-elect Al-Nasser of our full support for his tenure. We have every confidence in his success.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of

Bolivia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Solón (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have the honour to extend our warm congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am sure that Member States appreciate the importance of being led by a representative who is firmly committed to issues and challenges in areas such as peace and security, development, social equity, climate governance and the protection of human rights. Ambassador Al-Nasser's leadership will promote our ongoing efforts to continue to strengthen the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

This is a crucial time for the international community — a time of economic and financial crisis in which we also continue to be challenged by an environmental crisis; of great threats, such as that posed by food insecurity; and of a dangerous increase in poverty. We are certain that Ambassador Al-Nasser will take this opportunity to look ahead and achieve progress for all.

A law graduate of Beirut Arab University, throughout his 12 years as Ambassador in New York Mr. Al-Nasser has served both as Qatar's representative at the United Nations and as Chair of the Group of 77 during 2004. He has also served in a number of elected positions at the United Nations, including as President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. Such a background shows the very useful wealth of experience he brings to his tenure as President of the General Assembly.

The sixty-sixth session will begin with the Summit on Non-communicable Diseases. Another milestone in 2012 will be the holding, in Rio de Janeiro, of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro. At important events such as those, the President-elect will guide our steps towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Another of his top priorities will be to revitalize the General Assembly and to promote its importance, effectiveness and efficiency as the main body comprising all the Member States of the Organization.

The Latin American and Caribbean Group would also like to convey its gratitude to you, President Deiss, for your contributions to international community. We wish you and your Office a smooth transition. The Latin American and Caribbean Group looks forward to working closely with the President-elect. We assure him of our full support during his presidency.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar on his election to the presidency at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Ambassador Al-Nasser has garnered great expertise in the work of the United Nations during his long service as Qatar's Permanent Representative. His extensive experience will be of great value to the General Assembly as it addresses the range of pressing issues that are before the upcoming session.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, for your leadership of the sixty-fifth session of the Assembly. During your tenure we have witnessed significant progress in a number of important areas. Your tireless commitment to advancing the objectives of this session has been clearly evident, whether in promoting sustainable development, working towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals or advocating for United Nations reform. The Group of Western European and other States will do its utmost to assist you in completing consideration of the remaining items on the agenda and ensuring a smooth transition to the new presidency.

We pledge our full support to the President-elect and wish him every success in carrying out his duties during the Assembly's sixty-sixth session.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): On behalf of the United States of America, host country to the United Nations, I would like to extend our congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Nassir

Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. We appreciate Ambassador Al-Nasser's willingness to take on this role. He is richly qualified for the position, given his long diplomatic experience, including serving as the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations since 1998, serving on the Security Council in 2006 and 2007, and chairing the Fourth Committee during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

The United States greatly values the work of the General Assembly and believes that its President has a particularly important leadership role to play in our continuing efforts to make the Assembly more relevant and more effective in managing global challenges. We would like to assure the President-elect of our full cooperation.

The United States greatly appreciates your ongoing leadership, Mr. President, of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. You have actively promoted matters central to the Assembly's programme of work with devotion and respect for the United Nations Charter. You have been a particular strong advocate for the Millennium Development Goals, promoting sustainable development and economic structures that are more respectful of the environment and of future generations. We have especially welcomed your efforts to ensure the necessary follow-up to last September's historic summit on the Millennium Development Goals, which you presided over so effectively.

The United States looks forward to working with you, Mr. President, and with Ambassador Al-Nasser as we conclude the important work still facing us during this session of the General Assembly and prepare for a successful and productive start to the next session of the Assembly this fall.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have thus concluded our consideration of agenda item 4.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the sixty-sixth regular session

The President (*spoke in French*): As announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-sixth session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the Member States of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name is drawn will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by lot by the Secretary-General, Turkmenistan was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-sixth session.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to inform members that, immediately following the adjournment of this meeting, consecutive meetings of the First Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), and the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Committees will be held in the Hall to elect the members of their Bureaux.

Thereafter, the General Assembly will hold its 104th plenary meeting to elect the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-sixth session.

After the adjournment of that meeting, Member States will have the opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President-elect for the sixty-sixth session, in the Indonesian Lounge.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.